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## MIRACLE DAHLIA GARDEN

*of Curtis Redfern*

1949

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Department of Agriculture





## MIRACLE DAHLIA GARDEN *of Curtis Redfern*

123 North Alisos • Garden at 1223 East Quinientos  
Santa Barbara, California



hope that this little dahlia seed catalogue will be very interesting to you.

I want to express my appreciation to the Santa Barbara News-Press which assigned Mr. Chet Holcombe to visit my garden and write a feature story about my floral achievements which appeared in its Sunday edition, August 1st, 1948. In it Mr. Holcombe wrote under the heading "Dahlia Fancier Does the Impossible—Develops Self-Pollination Here." He continued: "After years of work and experimentation, Curtis Redfern has just achieved his goal—self-pollination of dahlias. Growers around the world had been striving without success to convey pollen from the anther of a dahlia flower to the stigma of the same flower. Redfern has accomplished it, achieving an inbreeding of the world's choicest blooms to insure the retention of qualities that are wanted rather than the former hit-and-miss method of cross-pollination between flowers." He further commented that I had retired as assistant to the Consulting Geologist of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company after forty-two years service, and that for eight years I was president of the Dahlia Society of California and three times a vice-president of the American Dahlia Society.

He then went on to comment that while the end of the War was a happy day for the world, it was not true for me as I had on V-J Day suffered a severe paralytic stroke and had lost the use of my left arm. That I had been in the hospital for three months in San Francisco and was practically an invalid in 1946.

He further stated that it took more than that to keep me down. That I came to Santa Barbara early in 1947 and established a garden at 1223 East Quinientos Street and continued experiments in the production of self-fertilized Mendelian dahlia seed, which I had carried on years ago in my San Francisco garden.

Late last September I solved the problem of self-fertilization and was watching with great interest the development of seed pods when the garden on Columbus Day was practically beaten down by a high, drying wind.

The seeds were harvested and planted the last week of February of this year. Many germinated within two days and some held off as long as a month before sprouting. The two hundred seedlings were potted in small containers and were planted in the garden during the first week of May. They started blooming in early July and many of the seedlings are still blooming now, in the middle of October.

## **GREGOR MENDEL (1822-1884)**

ALTHOUGH the fact of heredity has been known for two thousand years or more, the laws have only recently been discovered. These we owe to the Austrian monk, Gregor Mendel, who experimented with common garden peas and published an account of his work in 1865, at which time he made the statement that what we know today as the law of segregation and the law of re-assortment.

His momentous discovery was almost wholly neglected by his own generation and only brought to the attention of the world in general in 1900 when his paper was unearthed by three European botanists (deVries, Correm and Tschermak) who were also attempting to discover the laws of heredity. This is very important: the laws formulated by Mendel are absolute. They have never been proved incorrect. In simple words, a self-fertilized dahlia seed produces an  $F^2$  or second filial generation seedling.

I also succeeded in producing self-fertilized seed from many varieties of Carl Salbach's patented gladioli. These glad seed I will offer for sale next year.

Under Mendel's Law twenty-five percent of self-fertilized dahlia seedlings will be recessives, probably easily recognizable as wild species; twenty-five percent will be greatly improved new varieties, and fifty percent can be classed as normal, many of which would appeal to growers as worth introducing.

## **COMMENTS**

ABOUT JULY FIRST my seedlings began to bloom. The results can only be described as a scientific miracle.

The first to bloom was a seedling of the small cactus miniature Ste. Therese, a Holland dahlia described as rose colored with a creamy center. I had two seedlings of Ste. Therese; one produced a fiery scarlet, formal decorative seven inches in diameter, the other seedling was worthless.

Then the fireworks started. I had two hundred seedlings from twenty-seven varieties of dahlias. About one hundred and twenty of the seedlings were of a small pink ball dahlia named Pink Queen; about thirty-five were easily recognizable as wild species. Miss Alice Eastwood, Botanist of the California Academy of Sciences, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, advised me the Index Kewensis recognizes twenty-six dahlia species; this probably includes dahlia Juarezii, the first cactus dahlia, grown in Holland in 1872 by a dahlia breeder named Venderberg, the dahlia itself having been received from an unknown friend in Mexico.

Of the easily recognizable species of the Pink Queen dahlia seedlings were dahlias Cervantesii, Coccinea, Merckii, Viridiflora (the green flowering dahlia), and one closely resembling Juarezii, the cactus dahlia.

About thirty-five, or twenty-five percent, of the Pink Queen seedlings were so outstanding that I am going to grow them next year in my display garden. They were large, decorative and informal types, the colors ranging from pink, white, deep pink, lavender, rose and champagne colors. (It was about this time in the garden that my excitement reached fever-pitch, as each day some new seedling, better than its predecessors came into bloom. Evelyn Chandler produced eight seedlings. Evelyn Chandler is a gold-colored, semi-cactus variety and produced six new dahlias, all beautiful, but one an in-curved, pure yellow, semi-cactus eleven inches in diameter.

Andrei's Orange As, the beautiful miniature from Holland, produced eight fine miniature seedlings, the colors ranging from pure yellow to fiery crimson and one a salmon-colored semi-cactus. A few were miniature decoratives. Violette, a small semi-cactus from France, produced four seedlings; one, a pink, informal decorative, two, a pure white duplex white, and three, a very rich cerise-purple, incurved cactus about six inches in diameter. The bushes have been blooming all summer.

Now for the white varieties: Dr. Harden, of the Biology Department at the University of California at Santa Barbara, advised me that white-flowering varieties would probably produce white seedlings. Right here I want to emphasize the fact that all of the thousands of named varieties of dahlias in our gardens today represent the 161st generation of hybrid dahlias, as it was in 1789 that Vicente Cervantes, Director of the Mexican Botanic Garden, sent dahlia roots and seed to the Abbé Cavanilles, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Madrid. The following year roots and seed were disseminated to various Botanic gardens of Europe and America, becoming the forerunners of all the dahlias in our gardens today, so I called Dr. Harden's attention to the fact that occasionally the opening petals of a white flower will have veins with a trace of color, which undoubtedly indicates that in the ancestry of white dahlias color is present. Estrellita, a white miniature cactus dahlia, produced six semi-cactus dahlias, pink and lavender in color. D'Arcy Sainsbury produced a large lavender decorative, very reminiscent of 1—Bessie Bostons Shudow's lavender. 2—a large white decorative. 3—a large yellow, incurved cactus dahlia. (Dr. Harden has asked me to produce third generation seed of this variety, which will be grown under test conditions next year).

St. Cecelia is a five-inch, English type white cactus. Four seedlings of this variety produced: 1—An inferior dirty white miniature, decorative type; 2—a salmon-colored, slightly incurved, semi-cactus, and 3—the most fiery color, twelve inch diameter, incurved semi-cactus that resembles the famous European dahlia General Eisenhower. This is one of the finest dahlias I have ever produced and it is to be named for my grandson, Kenneth Gibson. The incurved yellow cactus seedling of Evelyn Chandler is to be named for my granddaughter, Susan Gibson. I prophesy that in three years from now these two dahlias will be winning prizes wherever grown.

I flatter myself that I know dahlias. Several of my originations have made wonderful records. Varieties like Barbara Redfern, Bagdad, Angelo Rossi, Mandalay, Shekina, El Rubio, Polaris, Vanity, Burgundy and Francescan are grown in America and Europe. I've judged shows in New York, Short Hills, New Jersey, Portland, Oregon, and California. This year I have travelled about three thousand miles, judging dahlia shows at California County Fairs, at Ferndale, San Francisco, Merced, and Los Angeles. Having a paralyzed left hand makes self-fertilization difficult at times, particularly the English cactus varieties, but I persist and many of the cactus varieties that I have worked on this summer have produced seed.

My garden book has two entries that I value very much. One was written by the well-known author and journalist, Edward A. MacManus, a personal friend of the late Peter Findley Dunn, author of *Mr. Dooley*, and a personal friend of the late Elbert Hubbard. Mr. MacManus wrote in my book:

"I believe we have found the Elbert Hubbard of the dahlia world." At the height of the flowering season, when the blooms were at their best, Mr. Warwick S. Carpenter, Western Manager of Harper's, visited the garden. I have known Mr. Carpenter for twenty-five years. He was formerly associated with the American Home magazine and collaborated with the late Darrell S. Hart in preparing the Annual Dahlia Roll of Honor. His comment in my garden book is the one word—"MARVELOUS!"

This year I grew more than one hundred varieties of the best dahlias I could obtain from France, Holland and the United States, including many of my own well-known varieties. The price is five dollars (\$5.00) per hundred seed, packed in five 20-seed packets of my own selection. Each packet has the seed parent's name, date seed were harvested on each envelope, and are signed by myself. These are the finest dahlia seed ever produced and are, undoubtedly, worth much more than the price quoted. Next year I expect to be in a position to supply second-generation

seed from named varieties in any quantity wanted. May I suggest the seed I am offering are an ideal Christmas gift? Add two and one-half percent sales tax if you live in California.

I acknowledge with thanks two gifts, one, a dozen of the best dahlias from M. R. Chevalier, 66 Rue Alfred DuBois, Marcoussis, France, and ten numbered seedlings from Messrs. Ballego & Zonen, Bloemhave Dahlia Nursery, Leiden, Holland. I am reciprocating by sending these gentlemen a supply a second-generation seed from the dahlias they sent me.

## VARIETIES

**ABBOT (Dutch)**—Deep petunia red, self-colored semi-cactus. Certf. Haarlem.

**ALLEGRESSE (Dutch)**—Pure sulphury yellow, semi-cactus. Improved Frau O. Bracht.

**AMI ROUSSET (French)**—Bright carmine red, tinged fuschia. Formal dec.

**ANDREI'S ORANGE AS (Dutch)**—Medium size, orange-gold, semi-cactus.

**ANGELO ROSSI (Redfern)**—Informal gold-colored dec. Winner of many prizes, including Challenge cup in Holland as best foreign dahlia.

**AUTUMN GLORY**, Almy—A large yellow, informal dec.

**BAGDAD (Redfern)**—Informal decorative, fiery scarlet. The late Darrill Hart considered it the most brilliantly colored dahlia he had ever seen.

**BARBARA REDFERN (Redfern)**—Large golden yellow informal dec. For years a great prize winning variety.

**BERGER'S MESTERSTUK (Dutch)**—Lovely rose colored, incurved cactus with twisted florets. Challenge cup winner.

**BURGUNDY (Redfern)**—Large purple informal decorative. Well-known in the United States and Europe.

**BLACK PRINCE (American)**—A deep velvety red, semi-cactus.

**CLARA CARDER (Australian)**—Large cyclamen pink, informal decorative.

**CINNAMON BEAUTY (Dutch)**—Mikado orange—informal dec. Mallow on reverse. Cert. Haarlem and Storrs, Conn.

**CLARA LUCY (Lucy)**—I grew this brilliant orange-scarlet, informal dec. for Mrs. Lucy; won best flower in the San Francisco Show and two weeks later won largest flower in the Alameda Show.

**COLBERT (France)**—Large velvety purple, semi-cactus, very fine.

**CONQUEROR (Dutch)**—An enormous yellow incurved cactus. Cert. and Belgian Challenge cup.

**CURTIS REDFERN**—A very large purple decorative, with white lancinated points at the tips of the petals. An enormous flower produced by one of the Franciscan padres or Fathers at the Old S. B. Mission here. This dahlia will have a great future. It will be introduced to commerce in about two years.

**D'ARCY SAINSBURY (Australia)**—Large white, informal dec.

**DAVE PLATT (Parella)**—Small white ball dahlia. Gold medal winner.

**ELSJE (Dutch)**—Golden yellow cactus. Certf. Amsterdam.

**EL SUEÑO (Redfern)**—Very large orchid pink, informal dec. Undoubtedly a seedling of AZURA.

**ESPLENDIDO**—Salmon colored semi-cactus.

**ESTRELLITA (Redfern)**—Very beautiful white semi-cactus miniature.

**FRANCISCAN (Redfern)**—An enormous velvety red, informal dec. An improved El Rubio.

**GAZELLE (French)**—Salmon rose and gold miniature, semi-cactus.

**GOLDEN JUPITER (J. A. Kemp)**—A greatly improved Ambassador, winner of many medals and probably the best semi-cactus dahlia in the world today. Color golden yellow with salmon tints.

**GOLDEN STANDARD**—Semi-cactus, color gold.

**GRACE GULLIVER**—Watermelon pink, semi-cactus, miniature.

**GYPSY (French)**—Brilliant red miniature.

**HELIOS (Dutch)**—Large yellow semi-cactus.

**HUGH HERBERT**—Yellow semi-cactus.

**JANE COWL**—Large golden yellow inf. dec. One of world's finest dahlias.

**LITTLE DARLING**—A creamy yellow miniature, semi-cactus, tipped pink.

**Le BARROIS (French)**—Yellow semi-cactus.

**LYREK (Dutch)**—Lilac cactus, incurved petals, Cert. Haarlem.

**MADAME ELISABETH SAWYER (French)**—Magenta-rose cactus, very fine.

**MANDELAY (Redfern)**—A very large yellow semi-cactus. A prize winner wherever grown.

**MEVROUW JONKHEER J. A. SANDBERG (Dutch)**—Dark, velvety red, incurved cactus. Distinct and rare in dahlias.

**MONARCH OF THE EAST**—Large golden yellow informal dec.

**MINETTE (Strumpe)**—A beautiful San Francisco miniature, color deep salmon with golden sheen.

**MOEDER BALLEGO (Dutch)**—Brilliant scarlet, semi-cactus. Challenge cup winner.

**MRS. LEE CRAWFORD (Redfern)**—Large yellow and salmon, incurved semi-cactus.

**NOIR MOUTIER (French)**—Maize yellow miniature cactus.

**ORANGE PRINS (Dutch)**—Pure orange cactus.

**PINK QUEEN (Gaylord)**—Self-colored, silvery pink ball dahlia.

**PRINCESSE LOUISE De SUEDE (France)**—By-colored, formal dec. Orange tipped white.

**PHEBUS (French)**—Yellow decorative.

**ROSENCAVALIER (Dutch)**—Satin rose cactus. Certfs. Haarlem and Amsterdam.

**RECHEM'S CANARY**—Bright canary yellow, cactus. Narrow petalled.

**ROBERT BAEELDE (Dutch)**—Lustrous salmon cactus.

**RIO DEL MAR**—Very large yellow, incurved semi-cactus.

**SIR HENRY DETERDING (Dutch)**—Pure yellow cactus.

**SAINTE THERESE (Dutch)**—Rose-pink cactus, with creamy center.

**SARRETT'S PINK FLAMINGO**—Pink semi-cactus.

**SATAN BALLAY**—Crimson semi-cactus.

**SANCY (French)**—Dark garnet red, informal dec.

**SAN MIGUEL (Redfern)**—Large brilliant red, informal dec.

**SAINT CECELIA**—Pure white, English cactus.

**SOUVENIR De GERARD VERGE (French)**—Rich crimson purple, incurved semi-cactus.

**SHEKINAH (Redfern)**—Pink semi-cactus.

**SOUVENIR De LOUISE OMNES (French)**—Bright orange semi-cactus.

**SOUVENIR De MARIE FAURE LAURENT (French)**—White dec.

**SOUVENIR De MARIE BOURCHEIX (French)**—An enormous informal dec., amber suffused madder red.

**TOP SCORE (Dutch)**—Bluish lilac cactus.

**TORCH (Dutch)**—Yellow cactus, suffused cerise.

**THOMAS A. EDISON (American)**—Purple informal dec.

**TORERO (French)**—Blood-red informal cactus.

**VOORZITTEROUD (Dutch)**—Violette-lilac rose. Dutch champion.

**VIVIANNE COPPENS (French)**—Lovely pure rose cactus. Certf. Considered best pure rose dahlia to date. Harvest is in—seed are available now.

**VICTORY DAY (Dutch)**—Enormous very red cactus. Challenge cup winner.

**VANITY (Redfern)**—Pink formal, dec. Sometimes with darker pink center. A big prize winner in California.

**VIOLETTE (French)**—Deep purple semi-cactus, base of petals tipped white.

**WENDELINE (Dutch)**—Champaigne-colored cactus. Certf.

**WILLY FLATON (Dutch)**—Attractive white cactus.

**YELLOW GIANT (Dutch)**—Bright yellow cactus.

**This year I produced self-fertilized Mendelian seed from dahlia roots sent to me. Let me do the same for you next year. My charge for this service is \$10.00 for each dahlia root sent to me.**

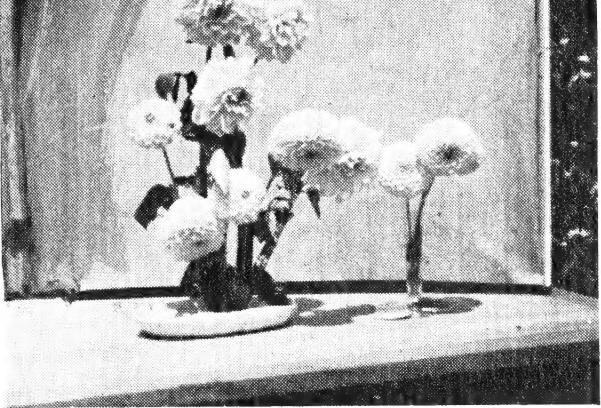
I guarantee to furnish you for this price one hundred seed from each variety you send me. If you want more than the one hundred seed included in this offer, there will be an additional charge of \$5.00 per hundred seed for all I produce in excess of the first one hundred. At the end of the season (about November 15th) I will return the clump to you by American Railway Express C.O.D.

Remember I specialize in the production of Mendelian second-generation dahlia seed. High labor costs and my handicapped arm prevent my accepting orders for dahlia roots.

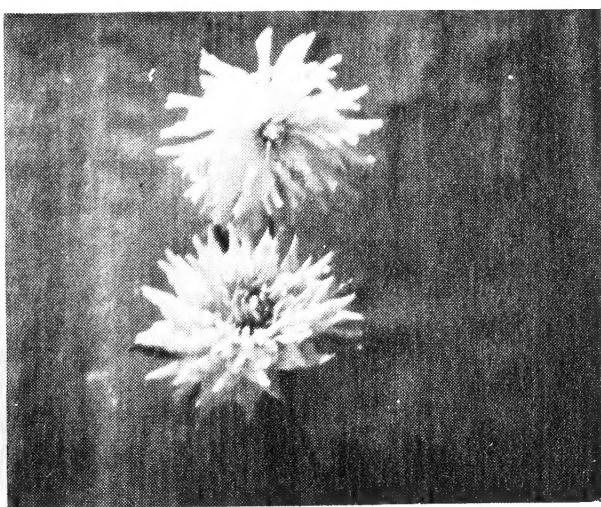
**THE HARVEST IS IN. SEED ARE AVAILABLE NOW!**

Sincerely,

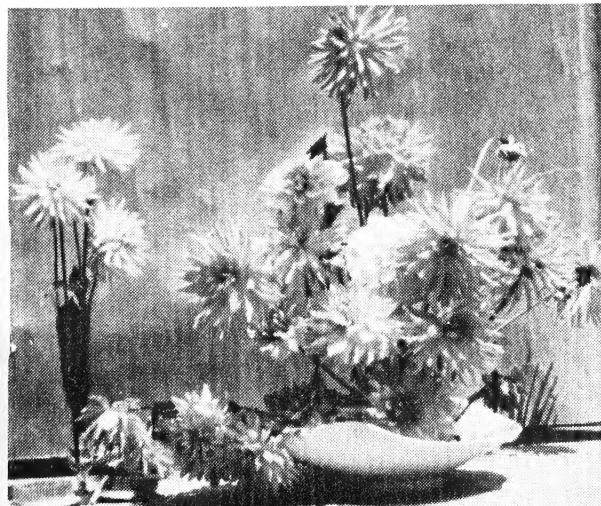
**CURTIS REDFERN,**  
Discoverer and producer of Mendelian  
self-fertilized dahlia seed



● **PINK QUEEN** and outstanding seedlings

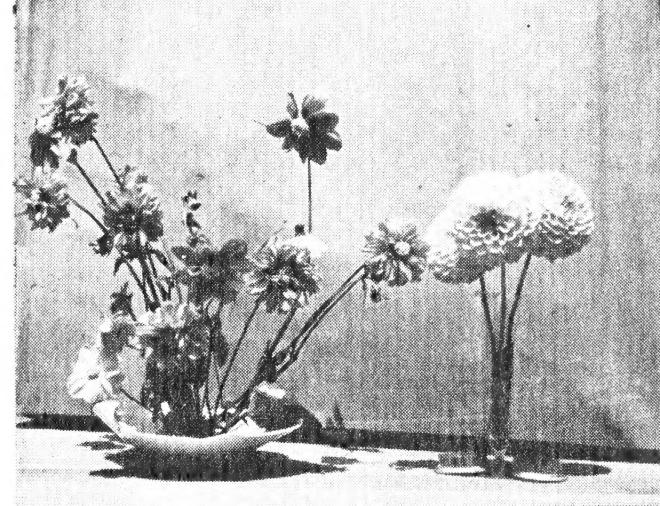
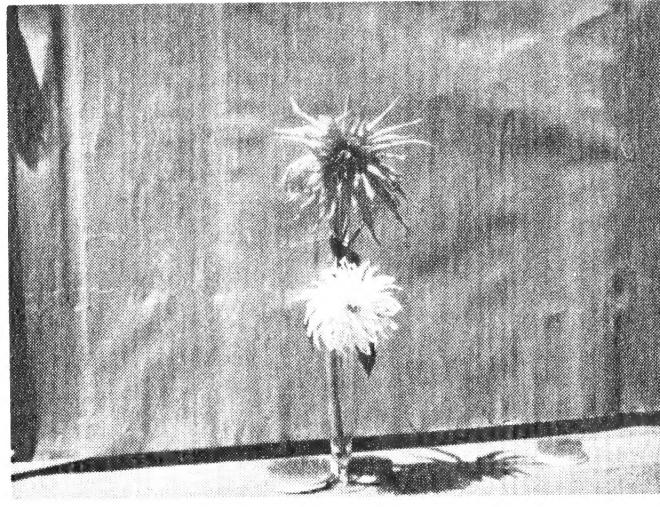
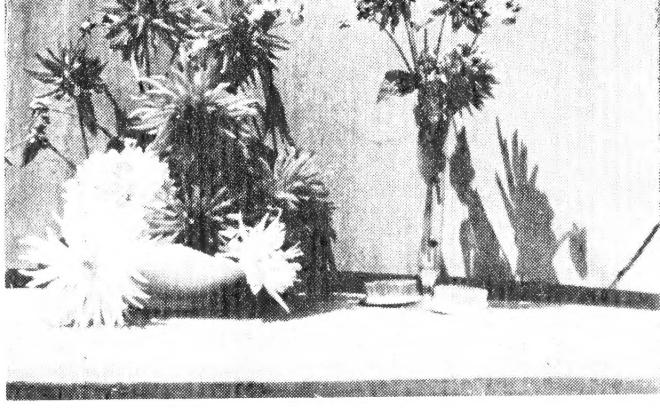


● **EVELYN CHANDLER** and seedling Susan Gibson



● **ANDREI'S ORANGE** and seedling

● **PINK QUEEN** and recessive seedlings





NOEL YOUNG *printer*